

Plum Brook Prairie Restoration

During the summer of 2002, the idea for a prairie restoration at Plum Brook began. The tallgrass prairie is an endangered Ohio ecosystem. Prior to European settlement in the early 1800's Ohio contained about 1,000 square miles of prairies, mostly scattered around the western half of the state, where the land is very flat. Most of these prairie were converted to farmland.

Plum Brook is also located in this flat, western Ohio region. An old prairie remnant, just outside of Plum Brooks fences is the Erie Sand Barrens, which NASA donated to the state. This prairie contains many sand-loving species, including little bluestem and least St. Johnswort (the only known Ohio population). But, within Plum Brook's gates are many endangered plants and animals, including tallgrass prairie plants. Due to the vast open areas of vegetated land, and its conduciveness to the tallgrass prairie, it was decided a prairie restoration would be undertaken.

Ohio prairie
– photo courtesy of David Dvorak Jr



Plum Brook staff has met with the USDA to discuss restoration techniques. During February 2003, a Species Management Plan was put together. Management would consist of preparing the soil, removal of unwanted plant species, gathering seed from Plum Brook's existing prairie plants, and sowing and encouraging growth. But, hand-in-hand with this, the deer population would need to be brought under control.

On May 7, 2003, the chosen field was brush-hogged and burning completed. Deer culling was accomplished during the winter of 2003/2004, with the deer being donated to a local soup kitchen. Further plans will include soliciting volunteers for seed gathering and preparation.